



Council of Chief State School Officers 2017-2020 Strategic Plan

THE COUNCIL OF CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

The Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) is a nonpartisan, nationwide nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education in the states, the District of Columbia, the Department of Defense Education Activity, and five U.S. extra-state jurisdictions. CCSSO provides leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The Council seeks member consensus on major educational issues and expresses their views to civic and professional organizations, federal agencies, Congress, and the public.

*Learn more about CCSSO's Board of Directors and Leadership Team
by visiting the [About Us](#) section of the Council's [website](#).*

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INTRODUCTION

State education agencies, and those who lead them, play a critical role in ensuring that our schools and educators meet the needs of each student they serve. State chiefs are committed to **each child—regardless of background—graduating ready for college, careers, and life**. One way in which they act on that commitment is to create the right state conditions and expectations that provide each student access to the resources and educational rigor they need, at the right moment in their education, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, language, disability, sexual orientation, family background, or income.

Student achievement is life-determining and disparities in educational outcomes impact individual income, wealth, and employment. When these disparities are pervasive, our nation experiences economic stagnation, greater dependence on government supports, and fewer Americans able to contribute to their communities and society.

As leaders of public agencies with the ability to effect change at multiple levels, chiefs are uniquely positioned to help create the conditions in districts and schools that lead to equitable opportunities and outcomes for kids and, consequently, a stronger nation. To accomplish this, chiefs must engage a diverse set of stakeholders—students, families, teachers, principals, district leaders, policymakers, and representatives from the private-sector, faith-based community, and other community leaders—and forge productive partnerships to eliminate inequity. By doing so, chiefs take responsibility for providing and ensuring the potential for each student to succeed and contribute to the long-term growth of their community, state, and nation.

Achieving educational equity¹ requires a focus on both system inputs and outcomes. An adequate distribution of funding, access to high-quality teachers, rigorous coursework, support services, supportive school climates, technology access, and extracurricular opportunities all play a role in a student’s experience at school. Educational equity realized through providing students with meaningful diplomas, successful career opportunities, and access to college enrollment and completion are paramount to a strong economy and informed democracy.

Chiefs bring together diverse constituencies to pursue high quality educational opportunities to improve learning outcomes for all students. And as the national, nonpartisan organization representing all state chiefs, CCSSO is committed to the following areas of work in service of chiefs, their agencies, and children across the nation. The July 2017-June 2020 CCSSO strategic plan focuses on:

1. **Students:** Implementing high expectations for each student
2. **Critical student transitions:** Creating multiple pathways for student success
3. **Teachers:** Providing high-quality instruction and educational support
4. **School and district leaders:** Continuously improving schools for each student
5. **State leaders:** Leading effective state education agencies
6. **Our organization:** Providing a strategic, supportive Council

2017-2020 GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Throughout the plan, we have identified goals and strategies that directly advance equity commitments found in [Leading for Equity: Opportunities for State Education Chiefs](#). This document lists ten areas in which state chiefs can take action to create a more equitable education system in their state. State chiefs, and by extension the Council, have both an opportunity and responsibility to ensure that equity is at the foundation of all work undertaken. The Council has identified, and prioritized, ways to support states in advancing these equity actions so that each student has access to the resources and educational rigor they need at the right moment in their education, regardless of background or circumstance. *Note: The ten commitments, in abbreviated format, are located at the end of this document for easy reference.*

Goal 1: Students

States set high expectations for student success by creating opportunities and removing barriers

Advances equity commitment #1, #2, #3, and #7

Setting high expectations, ensuring appropriate supports, assessing whether those expectations are met, and designing and administering accountability systems are core state responsibilities. These levers must be designed with the intention of informing and improving the teaching and learning experience. Standards can articulate, clearly and transparently, what each student needs to know and be able to do. Assessments give students, parents, and teachers insights on students' progress toward meeting or exceeding the standards. Accountability systems provide necessary data that enable state leaders to better target support to close opportunity gaps and improve outcomes for all students. States have an important role in monitoring and oversight of equitable implementation of standards and assessments and ensuring their accountability systems are transparent and meaningful for stakeholders. States have the responsibility to leverage these foundational functions to improve the capacity of districts, schools, and teachers to ensure high expectations for each and every student. That requires an active state role in identifying problems of practice, designing supportive and solutions-oriented programs and policies, and ensuring greater transparency at the state, district, school, and community levels. **Therefore, CCSSO will support states as they...**

- 1.1 **Implement College- and Career-ready (CCR) Standards:** Improve the capacity of districts, schools, and teachers to implement standards with fidelity and ensure that high quality, standards-aligned curriculum frameworks, instructional resources, and professional development are available to every teacher
- 1.2 **Ensure Each Student Benefits from CCR Expectations:** Support English learners (ELs) and students with disabilities (SWDs) to meet college- and career-ready standards through equitable access to rigorous courses, high-quality instructional resources, and appropriate supports
- 1.3 **Implement Assessment Systems:** Establish and deliver valid and reliable assessment systems that inform student learning and provide equitable access and opportunity for diverse learners, including ELs and SWDs
- 1.4 **Leverage Accountability Systems:** Design and implement accountability and transparent reporting systems that measure what matters and drive student success in K-12 and beyond

Goal 2: Critical Student Transitions

States create multiple pathways for each student to successfully transition into, through, and beyond the K-12 system

Advances equity commitment #1, #4, #6, #7, and #10

A student's schooling experience is life-determining, and students must be supported at critical transition points as they enter into, advance throughout, and graduate from the K-12 system. These vital transition points within that experience are important for state, district, school, and community engagement and attention. States play a critical role in creating the structures and supports to help students enter kindergarten ready to learn and ultimately graduate high school ready for college, careers, and life. Meaningful partnerships with relevant state agencies, organizations, and institutions are required to ensure cohesive transitions from early childhood and to career and technical education, postsecondary systems (including two-year, four-year, and technical schools) and the military. At the same time, new paradigms of learning are changing the work and roles of teachers, putting students in charge of their own education, and democratizing access to high quality learning through internet-based tools and instruction. Harnessing these newer approaches and resources can help ensure multiple, effective, and seamless pathways into, through, and beyond the K-12 system and ultimately the quality of the student experience. **Therefore, CCSSO will support states as they...**

- 2.1 **Manage Transitions into K-12:** Ensure access to high-quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood education that prepares students for pre-K and elementary school
- 2.2 **Provide Multiple Pathways within K-12:** Support and scale models of personalized, competency-based, anytime/anywhere learning pathways for students to attain college and career readiness
- 2.3 **Ensure Students are Career-ready:** Provide all students access to high-quality career pathways and opportunities that culminate in a credential, degree, or set of knowledge/skills that are highly-valued by the labor market
- 2.4 **Promote Seamless Transitions to Post-Secondary Education:** Make pathways available to each student to attend a two-year, four-year, or technical post-secondary school without remediation

Goal 3: Teachers

States support teachers so each student experiences high-quality instruction *Advances equity commitment #4 and #8*

Our nation's students come to school with diverse needs and backgrounds, and state leaders must ensure that each student has access to an effective teacher prepared to meet those needs. When rooted in high standards and informed by balanced assessments, the quality of instruction—matched with a teacher's deeper understanding of each student—is the critical determinant of student learning. States acknowledge that teaching and learning are changing at a rapid pace with technology, so it is important that states support teachers in ways that both address the urgency of the moment and engage teachers in advancing this evolving vision of teaching and learning. **Therefore, CCSSO will support states as they...**

- 3.1 **Build a Diverse Pipeline:** Recruit and prepare a diverse, robust pipeline that brings needed talent into the teaching profession who are “ready on day one”
- 3.2 **Support Teachers to Improve Practice:** Provide teachers with high-quality professional learning that results in effective high-quality, standards-based instruction which meets the needs of each student
- 3.3 **Recognize and Engage Teachers:** Recognize and celebrate teachers who demonstrate exceptional impact on student success and engage teachers to inform and lead improvements in teaching and learning

Goal 4: School and District Leaders

States support school and district leaders to continuously improve schools *Advances equity commitment #4, #8, #9, and #10*

States have a responsibility and an obligation to help improve every school (not just the bottom 5%). For continuous improvement to occur in every school, states are critically aware of the importance of school leaders—particularly principals—and other inputs to improve school culture, instructional quality, and student academic outcomes. Therefore, they invest in evidence-based systems and strategies that incentivize, support, and/or intervene. This focus, at the state level, allows principals to readily build and lead high quality educational programs that meet the needs of all students. States also ensure—as a matter of both state leadership and federal law—that institutions of higher education, schools, districts, regional entities, and educational partners fulfill their specific roles and responsibilities to support and improve schools. **Therefore, CCSSO will support states as they...**

- 4.1 **Elevate and Support School Leaders:** Prioritize the key role school leaders play in school success, and develop diverse leadership pipelines that result in school leaders ready to create conditions for high quality teaching and learning
- 4.2 **Deploy Strategies to Improve Struggling Schools:** Develop a theory of action and strategies, grounded in evidence-based and best practice, that spur dramatic change in schools that are persistently not meeting the needs of kids
- 4.3 **Implement Continuous Improvement Models:** Cultivate state systems of school improvement that particularly address the role districts play
- 4.4 **Provide Choice and Options:** Explore and pursue high-quality, appropriate educational choice options (e.g., distance and virtual learning options, project-based/competency-based learning, charter and magnet schools, dual enrollment and work-based learning programs) that enhance or directly improve the learning experience

Goal 5: State Leaders

Chiefs maximize the effectiveness of their state education agencies both in service of and as partners with district/local leaders

Advances equity commitment #1, #2, and #5

Chiefs are uniquely positioned to transform systems of education—but to do this, they must build the capacity of their State Education Agencies (SEAs) to advocate for, lead, and implement their core reforms. This focus will enable SEAs to strategically align their resources to further the mission of advancing equity. **Therefore, CCSSO will focus on...**

- 5.1 **Chief and SEA Leadership:** Increase the leadership capacity of chiefs and their agencies to execute, in partnership with districts and schools, core reforms that advance equity
- 5.2 **Collective Action:** Provide high-quality, coherent networking and member services that leverage the collective power of chiefs and SEAs and advance each state's strategic vision
- 5.3 **Advocacy:** Consistently engage with and advocate to Congress, the White House, the U.S. Department of Education, and other federal agencies to ensure that federal legislation, regulations, and policy guidance results in a quality education for each child and systems that create that environment
- 5.4 **Communications:** Support chiefs and SEAs as they communicate their state vision and engage students, families, communities, educators, the media, and the public
- 5.5 **Federal Funding:** Help states maximize impact and increase transparency through the strategic use of federal, state, and district funds

Goal 6: Our Organization

CCSSO is a strategic and healthy organization that reflects a set of core values that enables us to advance equity for all kids

Advances equity commitment #1 and #2

In order to support chiefs to accomplish these goals, CCSSO is committed to embodying the behaviors and practices we hope to see in states and in the K-12 system at large. This means being an effective organization that puts equity front and center—both in our own internal operations and in the way we prioritize our work. **Therefore, CCSSO will focus on...**

- 6.1 **Implementation Progress:** Drive progress on implementation of the strategic plan by monitoring progress, identifying and solving problems early, and creating a culture of continuous improvement
- 6.2 **Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion:** Ensure CCSSO's culture promotes equity, is respectful of and celebrates diversity, and is appropriately inclusive in policy and procedures
- 6.3 **Human Capital Management:** Build, support, and retain an excellent staff that recognizes leadership at all levels, enables cross-collaboration, and applies talent to ensure goals and strategies are met
- 6.4 **Comprehensive Fundraising:** Develop and execute a comprehensive development strategy that establishes priorities and enables innovative, new, and current grant funding and business partner opportunities to support and advance the work across all goals and strategies
- 6.5 **Fiscal Management:** Apply sound fiscal practices and approaches that result in realistic budgets and improve the overall financial position of the Council
- 6.6 **Internal Operations:** Ensure internal operations (e.g., Internal Communications, Information and Technology Systems, Association Management System, Meeting Services) advance the strategic plan, focus on quality member service, eliminate redundancies, minimize bureaucracy, foster transparency/information sharing, and best position CCSSO externally

¹ [Equity Commitments: Opportunities for State Education Chiefs](#)

1. Prioritize equity: set and communicate equity vision and targets
2. Start from within: focus on the State Education Agency
3. Measure what matters: create accountability for equity
4. Go local: engage Local Education Agencies and provide tailored and differentiated support
5. Follow the money: reallocate resources to achieve fiscal equity
6. Start early: invest in the youngest learners
7. Engage more deeply: monitor equitable implementation of standards and assessments
8. Value people: focus on teachers and leaders
9. Improve conditions for learning: focus on school culture, climate, and social-emotional development
10. Empower student options: ensure families have access to high quality educational options that align to community needs



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